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By *MN* NARA Date *9/10/94*~~SECRET~~~~SECRET~~ SecDel/MC/

September 18, 1969

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SECRETARY'S DELEGATION
TO THE
TWENTY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
New York, September, 1969

NODIS REVIEW

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Reviewed by: Ambassador W. Wilman, II

Date: *9/11* 19 *76*MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

DATE: September 18, 1969

TIME: 2:25 p.m.

PLACE: Waldorf Astoria

SUBJECT: Review of U.S.-Tunisian Relations - Part II of II

PARTICIPANTS:

U.S.: The President
The Secretary
Mr. Henry A. Kissinger
Mr. John F. Root

FOREIGN: Habib Bourguiba, Jr
Secretary of State
for Foreign Affairs
of Tunisia
Salaheddine El Goulli;
Permanent Repre-
sentative of
Tunisia to the UN
Rachid Driss
Ambassador of
Tunisia to the US
Noureddine Mejdoub
Counselor,
Tunisian Embassy
Washington, D.C.

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The President referred to the recent change of regime in Libya. The Tunisian Foreign Secretary said the first impressions of the new regime were not particularly encouraging. Some of its pronouncements sounded Bathist. The coup had happened almost too quickly. Libya was perhaps due for a change but now the danger was that the pendulum would swing

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too far in the other direction. Tunisia had hoped Libya would remain a no-man's land, a buffer zone between Tunisia and the radical governments to the East but now Tunisia had much reason to be concerned. The race for influence in Libya was on - Iraq, Syria, Egypt would all try to influence Libya's new leaders.

The President asked about the attitudes of Tunisian youth - did they continue to feel strongly about the Palestine refugee problem, for example? Bourguiba Jr. confirmed that the Middle East question was capable of arousing emotions in Tunisia. The President recalled that President Bourguiba had spoken to him in 1957 about the problem of Egyptian teachers exported throughout the Arab world. Bourguiba Jr. agreed that they had been an unhelpful factor - Tunisia had never been willing to receive any, and even Algeria found it had to get rid of those it had admitted.

President Nixon said it was unfortunate Tunisia had not been a major beneficiary of the large oil discoveries in North Africa, but he was nevertheless encouraged to learn that Tunisia was going forward with its development. He understood that the Foreign Minister had had discussions with Secretary Rogers about the problem of the Tunisian armed forces. The President said he would like to ask frankly whether Tunisia faced a serious problem of internal security. Was the problem increased by the new situation along the Libyan border?

Bourguiba Jr. answered that of course there was some grumbling, as in every country, but the Tunisian government kept a careful eye on public opinion and was trying to keep domestic unrest within bounds. Recently, for example, it had "changed gears" on its program of cooperatives because public opinion was not yet ready to tolerate too rapid an advance in this respect. Tunisia was not dogmatic in its policies, but pragmatic.

The President said he wished to speak in candor about the problem of arms deliveries. This was an issue which of course raised domestic difficulties for us. Yet here was a country like Tunisia which had always placed the emphasis on civil authority and which had never sought an arms capacity directed against anyone else. We had appreciated President Bourguiba's great courage in speaking out forthrightly on the great issues of the day - even when this was not always the popular thing to do at the moment and sometimes not even a matter of direct importance to Tunisia. He could instead have taken the popular and demagogic position.

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The President said he felt it was important therefore that Tunisia have what it really needs and that the United States do what it reasonably could to help meet these needs.

Secretary Rogers confirmed the President's impression that the question of additional arms aid was already under review in Washington as a result of the conversation he had had earlier this week with the Tunisian Foreign Minister and that we were hopeful of some kind of answer for the Foreign Minister before he leaves this country. The Secretary added that he felt that the matter of military assistance was important for the reasons already given but also as a boost to the morale of the Tunisian people.

Bourguiba Jr. readily agreed. Tunisia, he said, was like the piece of ham in a sandwich. The ham needed a bone - a deterrent to anyone who tried to gobble it up.

The President said additional arms aid was likely to cause us a political problem here, but the Administration was prepared to cope with it. The President said he felt it very important that the nations of the world, like Tunisia, which presented no military threat to anyone and which were trying to live decently, not be allowed to fall because of inadequate defensive means. Their peoples must have sufficient confidence that their security requirements are being met so that they can successfully pursue their constructive peace-time goals.

The President then commented on what he called the terribly difficult problem of the Middle East. He said we know that the Middle East question presents a very special difficulty for those countries living in that general part of the world. We are trying our best to be fair and to find some basis for settlement. He could not be very optimistic at the moment about the outlook, but on the other hand we cannot give up trying to find a solution. If the Foreign Minister found a good solution, he should certainly let us know.

Bourguiba Jr. said he would be failing his duty to be frank, as friend to friend, if he did not warn that some of the comments on the Middle East in the President's General Assembly speech today would be badly received by the Arabs. Some of the phrases would seem to them to be leaning to the side of the Israelis. For example, the President had said that the 1967 resolution "maps the way" to a settlement. This would sound to Arab ears like the Israeli thesis that the resolution is only a start. The Secretary said there is quite a difference between a "start" and something

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that "maps the way". The latter implies a great deal more about the guide-lines for negotiation.

The President noted we had already had a complaint from the Israelis about his statement that there should not be any substantial change of the borders. This was a very significant part of his comments. We believe in the 1967 resolution. There is no doubt that there is a lot more to be spelled out and of course it takes two to make an agreement. But the resolution "maps" the trip to be taken. Now it is necessary for the parties to take it. We are trying hard to be fair to both sides and to stay in the middle. We earnestly seek peace in the area and the Tunisian Foreign Minister could reassure his reasonable Arab colleagues of our intentions. Bourguiba, Jr. remarked that unfortunately there were fewer and fewer falling in this category.

In closing, the Tunisian Foreign Secretary congratulated the President for the courageous stand he had taken in his speech not only on Vietnam but also on the Chinese question.

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